

**SECOND EDITION**

# **Teaching Children Physical Education**

***Becoming a Master Teacher***



**Includes CD-ROM  
with video clips**

**George Graham**

# **Teaching Children Physical Education**

**Becoming a Master Teacher**

**Second Edition**

**George Graham, PhD**

**Virginia Tech  
Blacksburg, Virginia**



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For Nick and Tommy

I am truly fortunate to have such wonderful sons. I am so proud of who you are—and who you are becoming.

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# Preface

Since the publication of the first edition of *Teaching Children Physical Education* in 1992 there have been three major changes that have had an impact on this second edition. The first is the Internet. I find it hard to believe that the first edition did not even mention e-mail, the World Wide Web, and electronic discussion groups. As I revised the book, however, it became clear how pervasive the Internet has become—in teaching and in our everyday lives. It will be fascinating to see what changes have emerged when it is time to do the third edition.

Another change that also falls into the category of technology is the advent of CD-ROMs as an alternative to videotapes. This new technology has allowed us to include a CD-ROM with each copy of the second edition. They include examples of some of the teaching skills described in the second edition so that you can actually see the skills being demonstrated in real-world teaching situations.

The third major change to the book since 1992 is in the area of assessment. In the past few years educators have focused on alternatives to traditional forms of standardized tests. Thus chapter 13, “Assessing and Reporting Children’s Progress,” has been totally revised to reflect the new trends in measuring children’s progress and program effectiveness. It includes a number of examples, many of which are tied directly to the *National Standards in Physical Education* which were published by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education in 1995.

The remaining chapters have also been revised and updated to reflect additions to the literature since the first edition. Much of what was written in these chapters, however, did not undergo drastic revisions as what we know about effective teachers, those who promote learning and positive attitudes in youngsters, has not changed substantially since the first edition was written.

In writing this book, I have tried to write from the perspective of a teacher as opposed to that of a university professor. I have done this for several reasons. The first is that for over 30 years now my work has been focused on children and physical education—and especially those who teach it! When I conduct workshops and make speeches, one of the highest compliments I receive is when teachers say to me that they really feel like I know kids and what it is like to teach physical education in elementary schools.

I have also worked hard to stay “connected” to schools and teachers. It is all too easy to be at a university and lose touch of the realities of teachers’ lives and what it is like to teach several hundred children a day, with barely enough time to eat lunch and use the restroom. As I write this second edition, many states have implemented high-stakes testing with public accountability. Consequently, in addition to everything else they do, some teachers are having to justify their programs more than ever before. While this is not part of their job description, it is a wearying, time-consuming, and often frustrating part of teaching children’s physical education as we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Finally, I have been fortunate to be surrounded by excellent children’s physical education teachers who both inspire and impress me with their teaching skills and effectiveness with youngsters. They are truly geniuses with kids! The teacher I have spent the most time with over the years is Casey Jones. When I wrote the first edition, Casey was teaching at Margaret Beeks Elementary School in Blacksburg—in a cafeteria and on the playground. Several years ago “we” moved to Kipps Elementary School with a wonderful new gymnasium—and what a difference that makes!

Casey is a dedicated professional who has taught me more than he knows about kids and teaching physical education—and has helped me stay in touch with the realities of teaching elementary school physical education. This is especially true on the days when I teach the children and quickly realize that it is not as easy as experts like Casey make it appear.

In writing this book I have tried to express the perspective of a teacher while also relying on the teaching research completed in the last 30 years or so. I have applied it to teaching children's physical education so that it will be of value to undergraduates, as well as those already teaching. This book is unique in that it focuses totally on the teaching process—the skills and techniques that successful teachers use to make their classes more interesting and appropriate for children. Future teachers will find the book helpful because it describes and analyzes many of the teaching skills and techniques used by veteran teachers. Topics such as motivation, minimizing discipline problems, and structuring successful learning environments will be of particular interest to the novice.

The experienced teacher, in contrast, will discover that some of the techniques he or she already used are named and described in the book. I hope that the veteran teacher will also be challenged to consider some new techniques for structuring their classes, developing lessons, and adjusting tasks for individual children—ideas that will benefit them and the children they teach. We have learned a lot about teaching in the past 30 years, and the veterans will find much of this information both useful and informative.

Because this book is intended for both experienced and beginning teachers, I have included many practical examples in the form of teaching scenarios and vignettes throughout the text. It is obvious that the teaching process (that is, what the teacher actually does) cannot be separated from the content to be taught. For this reason, many of the analyses and descriptions of the various teaching skills include examples of the content (activities or tasks) typically found in children's physical education classes.

## FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Teaching cannot be reduced to a simple formula. There are always decisions to be made—quickly and often. Learning to make these decisions can only be done “on one's feet.” We can read about what teachers do, but until we ourselves are actually in the “eye of the hurricane,” it is difficult to grasp the complexity of choices confronting a teacher. In writing this book, I have attempted to explain the decision-making process by separating it into various chapters. Realistically, parts of every chapter in the book will be used in virtually every lesson that is taught. To help you integrate, I have included several features to encourage the type of thinking that we as teachers do during a lesson.

### Chapter Introductions

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction designed to “set the stage.” This is helpful for connecting one chapter with another and also for understanding the teaching skills and techniques that will be discussed in that chapter.

### Chapter Objectives

Each chapter introduction includes a series of objectives that highlight the key points in that chapter. Some books use the word *student* instead of *teacher*. I have used *teacher* instead of *student* because those who are interested in this book are, or will become, teachers.

## Insights

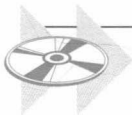
Throughout the book I have included informal insights or asides. These are based on experiences, my own or those of others, from teaching children in physical education settings. They are designed to provide the types of practical, interesting insights that are often not included in a book—but that help to personalize the book and make it “come alive.” A sample “insight” section follows:

### Mentoring

I am often struck by the fact that teaching is neither terribly difficult nor mysterious when it is one with one (e.g., a mother and daughter, an older and a younger brother, a grandparent and grandchild) tutoring. The tasks can easily be changed and accommodated to suit the needs and interests of that child. The problem in school, however, is that teachers are responsible for many children, have limited resources, and work in confined spaces—an awesome task that, viewed in perspective, is done remarkably well.

## CD-ROM

One of the highlights of the second edition is the inclusion of a CD-ROM with the book. This CD-ROM includes brief vignettes of elementary school physical education teachers demonstrating some of the teaching skills described in the book. Although the examples are limited we hope you will find them useful as another vehicle for understanding the various pedagogical skills and how they are actually implemented in real-world teaching situations. The skills that include a CD-ROM are indicated by the following icon:



### See topic 4

The companion CD-ROM provides a brief description of set induction along with an example of how one teacher introduces the technique of “quick feet” dodging a moving object.

As you view the examples on the CD-ROM we hope you will remember that these are taken from actual lessons and thus may not be perfect—but hopefully they will enhance your understanding of how these skills might be used in your teaching.

## Reflection Questions

Each chapter in the book concludes with a series of “Questions for Reflection.” Because teaching cannot be reduced to a precise formula, these questions are designed to help you think about the teaching process and the reasons why we teach the way we do. I hope that they will also lead you to question some of the ways physical education has been taught in the past—finding the good points and remodeling those practices that may be counterproductive for children.

One of the things we know about good teachers is that they have a sense of wonder about their teaching. They ponder such questions as “Did that work? How could it have been better? What would happen if . . . ? Why is that way better than another way? Are there other ways to do that in less time? How can I gain the interest of more children in what I am teaching?” I hope that the reflection questions at the end of each chapter will increase and deepen your sense of wonder about teaching.



## Chapter Summary and References

Each chapter concludes with a summary or parting thought and a list of the references cited in that chapter.

## OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

One of the challenges of writing a book on the process of teaching is figuring out how to describe a process that is intertwined, complex, and nonlinear. When we “break out” various teaching skills, we tend to oversimplify their use as they are removed from the dynamic context of a lesson. Realistically, however, one has no choice in a book. I hope that the CD-ROM vignettes and Questions for Reflection will restore a sense of context and complexity to the variety of skills that teachers use to create lessons both stimulating and beneficial to children. Furthermore, I have tried to arrange the chapters (after the introductory chapter) in chronological order, based on the points at which various teaching skills and techniques might be used in a lesson.

The introductory chapter places the book within the settings in which children’s physical education is actually taught. Discussions of the purpose, challenges, and rewards of children’s physical education are described in realistic settings. The chapter concludes by describing the type of knowledge possessed by successful teachers of children’s physical education and how it looks when translated into practice. The important message of the first chapter is that this book is about how to teach (the process); it is not a description of activities and games that teachers might use in teaching children.

Planning, the next chapter, is probably not a favorite subject—but it is a necessary one. It is placed at the beginning for obvious reasons. Ideas for planning and sequencing lessons and also for developing yearly plans that are sequential and developmentally appropriate are featured.

Discipline and off-task behavior are often primary concerns of teachers, so this chapter has also been placed early in the book. Chapter 3 describes how teachers minimize discipline problems by developing management routines (protocols) designed to prevent off-task behavior from the very first day of the school year.

Despite all of a good teacher’s intentions and preparations, some children will manage to be off-task. Chapter 4 describes how successful teachers deal with these problems.

A successful beginning to a lesson is often the prelude to a worthwhile class. Chapter 5 discusses this important aspect of teaching. Chapter 6 analyzes the ways teachers provide instruction and use demonstrations to help children better understand and retain important concepts.

A worthwhile topic for discussion among any group of teachers is “motivating children.” Chapter 7 suggests ways to do this and emphasizes intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation techniques.

One of the premises of this book is that good teachers recognize the differences in children—that one class of third graders is different from the next, and that within any third-grade class, there is a wide range of abilities and interests. This child-centered approach to teaching requires that a teacher be able to accurately observe and interpret the movement of children and then adapt the lessons accordingly. Chapter 8 presents techniques of observing and analyzing children as they move.

Questions such as “What is the best way to organize the content? When should I change from one task to another? and What do you do when the children need to continue working on a task, but they want to do something else?” are addressed in chapter 9.

Chapter 10 relates when and how teachers can provide useful feedback that is consistent with the focus of the lesson. Chapter 11 examines the teaching skills of asking questions and setting problems for children to solve, emphasizing the importance of cognitive understanding.

Chapter 12 focuses on the affective domain and suggests ways teachers can help children feel good about themselves and about physical activity. The final chapter on teaching skills (chapter 13) provides a contemporary perspective on assessing (testing) children in schools.

The book concludes with a chapter (chapter 14) on the importance of teachers' continuing to learn and develop professionally to avoid becoming stagnant and "out of touch."

# Acknowledgments

Now for the special part of the book—at least for me. The writing is done, it's time to reflect on all the folks I have worked with who have, knowingly and unknowingly, contributed to what I have written in the pages that follow.

Probably the most influential individuals in writing the second edition of this book are the incredible teachers that I am fortunate to be associated with and who continue to inspire and motivate me. In addition to Casey Jones, mentioned in the preface, folks like John Pomeroy, Liz Johnson, Sean Fortner, and Rosa Edwards are so impressive—and I don't think they have any idea of how good they really are with kids! They, and many teachers like them, do their jobs in a highly effective way without ever realizing how masterful they are in their teaching. They are no different than athletes at the height of their game—they make teaching appear so easy—and yet they have worked incredibly hard for years and years to arrive at the top of their profession. If I was not able to work with teachers like them, this book would be very different. I also want to say to all of the successful teachers that I have worked with, as well as those I meet at conferences and workshops, that I, for one, truly recognize and value both your commitment to kids and your tremendous talents. Although all too few recognize your excellence, you are truly touching the lives of the thousands of youngsters you work with throughout your careers.

Since the first edition of *Teaching Children Physical Education* was published in 1992, it has been used as the textbook for the American Master Teacher Program. As part of this program workshops have been conducted for over 2,000 teachers throughout the United States. I am especially appreciative of all the excellent work of the National Instructors who have taught these workshops—Marybell Avery, Craig Buschner, Christine Hopple, Dolly Lambdin, Larry Satchwell, Sue Schiemer, and Sandra Stroot. In addition to being excellent teachers they are also incredibly dedicated to quality physical education for children. In the process of conducting these workshops they spent many weekends on the road and lots of hours in airports. They have been, and continue to be, an inspiration to me in my work. I am indeed fortunate to be associated with such an exemplary group of educators.

I also want to express a special word of thanks to another selfless educator who has dedicated her professional career to enhancing the quality of physical education for children—Eloise Elliott. In 1996 Eloise became the Director of the American Master Teacher Program (AMTP) when it was transferred from Human Kinetics to Virginia Tech. Without her hard work and dedication, AMTP would not have survived. What few realize is that she chose to serve as the director of the program as an unpaid service to the profession. As a result, AMTP was able to get up and running at Virginia Tech. For the past several years Eloise has been ably assisted by Donna Shelor. Donna also worked incredibly hard, at all hours of the day and night, to make AMTP “work.” I am grateful for their efforts—and in awe of their ability to make AMTP function so well with limited resources and support.

Another continuing source of learning and inspiration for me are the students I am fortunate enough to work with at Virginia Tech. It should not be a surprise that I find myself challenged the most by my doctoral students who ask such penetrating, complex, and fascinating questions in their quest to become outstanding college professors and researchers. I learn more from them than they ever know, and I am grateful for their questions—and apologize for my inability to answer so many of

them. But, as I hope they have learned, the most important part of the journey is asking, and continuing to ask, the right questions.

In addition to my colleagues and students, I also want to acknowledge some of the folks at Human Kinetics who have worked so hard, and so well, to bring this second edition to press. First I want to thank Scott Wikgren for his support, keen insights, and willingness to “go to bat” for this book and also AMTP. Scott and I have worked together for a lot of years now, on several projects. He works hard from his office in Champaign, Illinois, to advance the “new” physical education. His title at Human Kinetics is Acquisitions Editor, but underneath it he is a physical educator who knows “good” physical education and is doing his part to spread the word.

I also want to express my appreciation to Rebecca Crist at Human Kinetics who served as the Developmental Editor for the second edition. I especially appreciate her patience, willingness to listen, and insights about how this edition could be improved from the first one. I am also grateful to the others who worked on this edition—Mark Zulauf, the Assistant Editor; Kathy Fuoss, the Graphic Artist; Courtney Astle, the Permissions Manager; and the rest of the Human Kinetics team.



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